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Labour force participation of Australian women continues to rise

According to figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) today, 71 per cent of females aged 15 to 69 spent some time in the labour force (i.e. either working or looking for work) in the 12 months ending February 2001.

This continues the steady increase over the past decade, from 67 per cent in 1991.

During the same period, 85 per cent of males aged 15 to 69 participated in the labour force, a figure that has remained relatively steady since 1991.

Participation in the labour force during the year ending February 2001 was highest for people aged 20 to 24 (91 per cent), and lowest for those aged 55 to 69 (44 per cent).

Of the 9.9 million people who worked at some time during the year ending February 2001, 55 per cent were male. Approximately 70 per cent of these males worked for the entire 52 weeks, compared to 62 per cent of females.

Of the 1.7 million people who looked for work at some stage during the year ending February 2001, the majority were aged 15 to 34 (60 per cent for males and 62 per cent for females). The median duration of time spent looking for work varied from 8 weeks for people aged 15 to 19, to 22 weeks for those aged 55 to 69.

Of the 6.0 million people who were not in the labour force at some time during the year ending February 2001, 3.6 million (60 per cent) were female and 2.4 million (40 per cent) were male. Almost half (49 per cent) of these people spent no time in the labour force during the year. The main activities while not in the labour force for males were 'holiday, travel, or leisure activities' (26 per cent), 'attended an educational institution', (26 per cent) and 'retired or voluntarily inactive' (20 per cent), while for females, the main activities were 'home duties, or child-care' (50 per cent), and 'attended an educational institution' (17 per cent).

Further details can be found in the publication **Labour Force Experience, Australia, February 2001** (cat. no. 6206.0). If you wish to purchase a copy of this publication contact the ABS Bookshop in your capital city.

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